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Book Review: Crucifixion and New Creation

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Jeff Hubing. *Crucifixion and New Creation: The Strategic Purpose of Galatians 6:11–17*. Library of New Testament Studies 508. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015. xiii + 282 pp. £28.99/\$39.95.

This work primarily examines Galatians 6:11–17 in light of its epistolary function and the letter’s persecution theme. *Crucifixion and New Creation* is a lightly revised version of Jeff Hubing’s dissertation, completed at Loyola University under the supervision of Thomas Tobin. Hubing is currently the President of FIRE School of Ministry in Chicago, IL.

Hubing first addresses the epistolary function of Galatians 6:11–17 in chapter two by assessing scholarly contributions to this issue. Here Hubing reviews the work of several scholars and identifies three closely related problems: 1) terminological issues; 2) an overemphasis on Paul’s comment in Galatians 6:11; and 3) the tendency to identify verses 11–17 as a letter closing (pp. 3–4, 42).

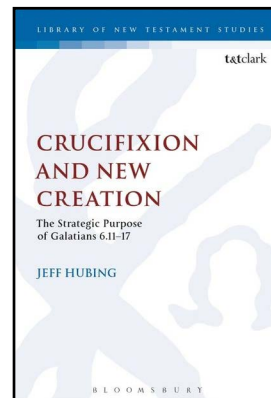
Chapter three then presents Hubing’s own assessment of the epistolary function of Galatians 6:11–17. Hubing first compares letter closings in Greco-Roman letters with Galatians 6:11–17 and concludes that there are insufficient similarities to warrant identifying verses 11–17 as the letter closing of Galatians (pp. 46–71). He then compares body closings in Greco-Roman letters with Paul’s statements in verses 11–17. Hubing concludes that while Paul does modify these secular conventions for his own purposes, enough similarities exist to warrant identifying verses 11–17 as the body closing (pp. 72–81). Importantly, Hubing notes Paul begins (vv. 12–13) *and* ends (v. 17) this body closing with statements concerning persecution (pp. 83–84).

Hubing next addresses scholarly discussions of the letter’s persecution theme in chapter four. The contributions of E. Baasland, A. J. Goddard and S. A. Cummins, J. Muddiman, and T. Martin are all carefully evaluated. Hubing particularly highlights Muddiman’s analysis, which differentiates between several different participants (Paul, the Galatian believers, the “agitators,” and those whom the “agitators” are seeking to make an impression on) within the letter.

Chapter five then examines four explicit references to persecution in Galatians (Gal 1:13–14; 1:21–24; 4:28–5:1; 5:7–12). Hubing’s discussion of persecution is especially important because it sheds light on his assessment of the historical situation in Galatia. More specifically, Hubing concludes from these four texts that the Galatian believers are currently being persecuted (pp. 142–43); this persecution is coming from a non-Christian element within first-century Judaism (pp. 143, 152–53); the oppression primarily takes the form of “a diabolical strategy of deception, misinformation, and subtle compulsion in order to manipulate the Galatians into accepting circumcision” (p. 157).

Six implicit references to persecution in Galatians (Gal 1:7; 2:1–5; 2:11–14; 3:1–5; 4:12–18; 5:4) are the subject matter of chapter six. Hubing’s analysis of these texts helpfully demonstrates that all the major parties referenced in Galatians are somehow associated with persecution. Hubing especially emphasizes how these texts describe different responses to persecution. For Hubing, Paul presents himself as an example of one who appropriately responds to persecution, in contrast to those like Peter, who hypocritically avoid suffering for the sake of the gospel (pp. 185–86).

Hubing then carefully analyzes Galatians 6:11–17 in chapter seven. The focus of this detailed treatment of verses 11–17 is twofold. First, he explains how reading verses 11–17 as a body closing impacts the interpretation of this text. Second, he explains how verses 11–17 continue the letter’s



persecution theme. Based on his epistolary analysis, Hubing argues that verses 11–15 confirm Paul’s rationale for writing Galatians by highlighting the stark contrast between Paul and his opponents, both in terms of their assessment of the cross and their willingness to accept persecution for the cross. Hubing also concludes that verses 16–17 create a foundation for further interaction between Paul and the Galatian believers by 1) presenting an implicit threat to those who do not accept his assessment of the cross (v. 16); and 2) following that threat up with an explicit warning in verse 17 to those who hamper his ministry in Galatia (pp. 245–257). Finally, Hubing suggests that verses 12–13 develop the persecution theme in Galatians by providing new information about the hypocritical motivations of Paul’s opponents (pp. 207–214).

This study is a helpful analysis of Galatians. Hubing’s treatment of the persecution theme in Galatians is particularly constructive. Readers interested in epistolary analysis will find his examination of the function of Galatians 6:11–17 especially stimulating as Hubing’s objections to viewing Galatians 6:11–17 as a letter closing are indeed sound.

Having said that, those who are skeptical of the value of epistolary analysis will likely be left wanting more. Hubing himself recognizes that Paul’s statements in Galatians 6:11–17 are quite dissimilar to the formulaic expressions found in the common Greek letter tradition (pp. 72–82). Furthermore, while it seems plausible to interpret the function of verses 16–17 as a “basis for further communication,” the same cannot be said for Hubing’s suggestion that verses 11–15 function as Paul’s “primary motivation for writing” (pp. 76–82).

The serious student of Galatians will likely find this an insightful analysis of the letter. Hubing’s assessment of prior scholarship on the epistolary function of Galatians 6:11–17 provides an important contribution, even if his own solution is wanting. Furthermore, his analysis of persecution in Galatians effectively highlights the importance of this theme and its practical significance (pp. 187, 262–63). Other issues in Galatians, particularly justification, tend to receive more attention. Hubing’s work will hopefully help remedy that lack of interest.

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Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God’s Redemptive Plan*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 34. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 208 pp. £12.99/\$25.00.

It is difficult to understand a book like Martin’s *Bound for the Promised Land* without realizing that it is sitting on top of an enormous controversy. His irenic style and casual assembling of biblical texts doesn’t let on why this topic starts wars—metaphorical theological wars and quite literal military campaigns. And he shies away from drawing out the obvious implications for us, something that every reader will look for. But first some background.

The subject of “land” is explosive. Is God the distributor of land? Is “land” an inherent cultural right for people (“This is my land”) or more tellingly, does it

